

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

24 January 2002
(4.30pm-5.25pm)

PRESENT: Councillors: Smart (Chair), Slatter, Smith, Stebbings, White (Vice Chair). Graham Cuffley (Unison), Richard O'Leary (GMB).

1. MINUTES – 15 NOVEMBER 2001

The minutes of the meeting were confirmed by the Forum and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were none.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Dryden.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were none.

6. OUTCOME OF INVESTORS IN PEOPLE RE-ASSESSMENT

The Head of Personnel introduced the report on the assessor's feedback report by stating that although the Council had to improve in two areas by December 2002, there were many strengths which had been identified. The Forum was advised that Personnel were in the process of planning how to tackle the two areas which require further development in 2002 ('people believe their contribution to the organisation is recognised' and 'managers are effective in supporting the development of people') and that there would be an Action Plan to follow.

Graham Cuffley stated that one reason why the Council needed to be re-assessed on the two factors was that although Personnel were providing appropriate guidance and support to departments and individual managers, a lack of consistency in take-up and implementation was evident. He was also concerned that the reduction in the training budget for 2002/03 could have an impact on future assessments.

In response to questions on heavy workloads and recruiting to vacant positions (page 6), the Head of Personnel advised that this related to the approval process required of the Chief Executive and Leader, although it was difficult to understand what had led to this perception because it was only followed for a minority of cases. However, the Forum was advised that the procedure would be modified to limit further the number of posts which require such approval.

The Chair noted in particular the positive remarks concerning the Council's induction for new staff, communication and commitment to developing staff. The Chair placed on record her thanks for the work undertaken for the re-assessment and for the work which will be required to fully achieve the Investors in People Standard by December 2002.

Resolved –

To note that whilst the Council has retained its liP status for the third time, there are two out of twelve indicators that are not being met or fully met.

To acknowledge that the Council has up to one year to take appropriate action to move forward in relation to the issues identified in indicators 3 and 8. Within that timescale the assessor will re-visit the Council to assess whether the Council meets those indicators.

7. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TARGETS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT

Referring to the comments made in paragraph 8 of the report, the Head of Personnel advised the Forum that with the reduction in staff within her section as part of the budget savings for 2002/03, the section would need to focus its attention on operational support with any spare capacity devoted to developmental work ie. having a reactive not proactive focus.

Graham Cuffley expressed concern that the forms provided by personnel for an employee wishing to complete an exit interview in writing were returned and dealt with (initially) by the relevant department rather than Personnel. It was acknowledged by the Forum that this was not appropriate and should be looked at by the Head of Personnel.

Resolved –

To confirm for inclusion in the 2002 BVPP the BVPIs as set out.

Agree the draft targets set against the indicators for 2002/03.

Approve Service Improvement Proposals and resource implications for 2002/03.

8. UPDATE ON NJC JOB EVALUATION SCHEME

Richard O'Leary advised the Forum that a recent GMB led survey of London and the Eastern Region had identified that the Council was well ahead in implementing a scheme. He stated that it was very important that the Council got the scheme right, to which Graham Cuffley concurred and stated that members should accept that the process must not be rushed. It was noted that the work of the GMB/Unison had been considerable during the process.

Resolved -

To note the contents of the report, the indicative timescales outlined in the Implementation Plan and to support the continued implementation of the project.

9. CONSULTATION ON PAY AND CONDITIONS NEGOTIATIONS 2002

The GMB had done a lot of work in this area and Richard O' Leary stated that the local issues for Cambridge, primarily house prices and cost of living led to the conclusion that a local weighting allowance was required. Graham Cuffley stated that the fact that there existed the long-term erosion of job security in local government and that pay was not keeping pace with costs in Cambridge, continued to cause difficulty for the recruitment and retention of staff .

The Chief Executive stated that any local weighting would have to be recognised by central Government in the Grant Settlement. The Council was however party to on-going discussions to try and influence Government thinking on the matter of promoting low cost housing through planning policy.

The meeting ended at 5.25pm

Chair